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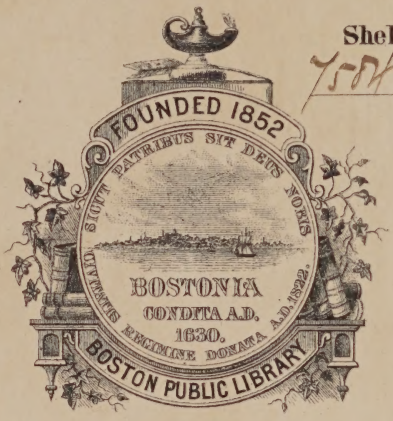

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THE

ANTI-SLAVERY REFORM,

ITS PRINCIPLE AND METHOD.

BY WILLIAM I. BOWDITCH.

BOSTON:
ROBERT F. WALLCUT, 21, CORNHILL.
1850.

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Oct. 24, 1871.

NOTE.

The substance of the following remarks was spoken by me at West Chester, Penn. on the thirteenth of last month. Having been requested to report my remarks, I have endeavored to do so as accurately as possible. Whilst I have extenuated nothing that I said, I have ventured to add two or three sentences and a few notes.

W. I. B.

Nov. 1850.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON,
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THE ANTI-SLAVERY REFORM.

When Milton was engaged in writing his "Second Defence of the People of England," he had wholly lost the sight of one eye, and the sight of the remaining eye was partially affected. He was advised by his physician, that, if he persevered and completed his task, he would become totally and hopelessly blind. And what did that old hero in the cause of civil and religious liberty do? Did he hesitate or falter at the prospect? No: he steered right onward, nor bated jot of heart or hope, and finished the work which was set before him, — that noble task with which all Europe rang from side to side. And, when the evil days of the Restoration found him eyeless, among enemies, but triumphant in soul, what supported him in his terrible affliction? Let his own words, taken from his magnificent sonnet to Cyriack Skinner, answer: —

> What supports me, dost thou ask? —
> The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
> In liberty's defence.

Blind, among enemies, Milton enjoyed that unspeakable consolation, — the reflection, that, for the cause of liberty, he had been willing to endure a trial

> worse than chains,
> Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age.

From this experience of Milton we may draw lessons which cannot fail to strengthen our minds for the great conflict which is before us.

Three times, since the adoption of the national Constitution, have the friends of freedom and the friends of slavery come in conflict. In 1820, the question came up for decision by this nation, Shall the evil of slavery be extended across the Mississippi, or shall the curse be there arrested? The struggle was an earnest, a glorious one; but the friends of freedom were overcome, and slavery was suffered to extend across that river. In 1843–4 it was proposed to annex a foreign Slave State to this Union, partly, if not mainly, for the purpose, openly avowed by our government in its official papers,* of protecting the institution of slavery, and of preventing the establishment of a free nation on our south-western frontier; and again a desperate struggle ensued, and again the friends of freedom were overcome. And now, after the lapse of fifteen years of anti-slavery agitation, Congress, after one of the stormiest sessions on record, has just passed a series of bills for the purpose of for ever "settling," they say, the questions growing out of the existence of slavery; and among these bills is one, — the Fugitive Slave Bill, — the infinite atrocity of which I will not undertake to portray, and which, in truth, none, but one of that class upon whom it is designed to operate, can adequately describe.

In these, our evil days, apparently defeated at all points, what supports us? The conscience, friends, that our cause is just, and that success is as certain as that the eternal God is just. We meet here to-day, in anti-slavery convention, with as unshaken a conviction that our principle is true, with as unshaken a conviction that our method of spreading that principle is the only right method, and with as resolute a determination to persevere, until success shall crown our efforts, as in the day of our brightest hope and expectations.

What is the principle which underlies the anti-slavery movement? It is that slaveholding is *always* wrong; not in

* See the evidence collected in "The War with Mexico reviewed," by Abiel A. Livermore, chap. iii.

this case or that case only, but in *all* cases; not under this state of circumstances or that state of circumstances only, but under *all* circumstances. And why have we this unshaken conviction that slaveholding is always wrong? Have not hundreds of reverend fathers in God constantly assured us that "slavery as it exists" is right? Does not the Rev. Theodore Clapp, the Unitarian clergyman of New Orleans, declare to us that God, the compassionate and merciful God, "deals in slaves"?* Does not the Rev. Moses Stuart, the Orthodox Christian of Andover, speak of "the ownership of slaves, which Heaven has given express leave to purchase"? ("Conscience and the Constitution," p. 35.) Does not the Right Rev. William Meade, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church for the diocese of Virginia, call upon the slaves in his diocese to fall on their knees, and devoutly thank God that he has made them slaves, in order the better to help them towards heaven?†

Have not the politicians of the country constantly declared to us, that that is property which the law makes property?

Have not the sober, practical men of the nation been continually warning us, that immediate emancipation would work greater wrong than keeping the blacks in slavery? that the evil consequences of immediate emancipation would be vastly greater than those of continued slavery? As if finite man, who can see with distinctness scarcely the first in the infinite chain of consequences that flow from the meanest act of his daily life, was to be called upon to decide a question of right and wrong by balancing consequences! These same sober, practical men not only disregard the demonstration of the safety of immediate emancipation, which has been afforded us by some of the West India Islands, but

* His words are: "Here we see God dealing in slaves, giving them to his own favorite child (Abraham), a man of superlative worth, and as a reward for his eminent goodness."

† His words are found in one of his sermons to the slaves. God, he says, "hath by his providence made you servants, because, no doubt, he knew that condition would be best for you in this world, and help you the better towards heaven, if you would but do your duty in it."

they are like the fool in the old story who resolved not to go into the water until he had learned to swim. As no man can learn to live in the water but by actual experience, so no slave can learn to live in freedom without actual experience: you cannot fit a slave for freedom. If you wait for emancipation until you can make the slaves wise and good as slaves, you must wait for ever.

Why, then, have we this unshaken conviction in the truth of our principle, if we are thus opposed by the priests, politicians, and practical men of the nation?

What is the highest test of moral truth? Is it to be found in the common consent of men? No: not even the omnipotent God can make right wrong. His laws are right, not because they are his, but because they are right. And can man, by merely *agreeing* that an act shall bear a certain character, affect at all the moral character of that act? No: though all the priests, politicians, and practical men of the world should agree, they could not make wrong right. Not all the creeds, constitutions, laws, and customs of the universe, can make wrong in the slightest degree right.

Is this test to be found in texts of Scripture? No: the same text is construed differently by different men; and who is authorized to settle the difference, and tell us surely what is the truth? Different texts are quoted on the same subject, and no power exists capable of reconciling the conflict.* It is

* To illustrate our position, we might take any one of the texts bearing on any of the reforms of the day. We shall refer only to one, which is commonly adduced as a conclusive authority in favor of the right to inflict capital punishment in case of murder. The text is, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Gen. ix. 6.

Assuming that the original Hebrew was written by the inspiration of God, does this text really afford us any test of truth? Not unless we are *sure* of two things: first, that our translation of the Hebrew is correct; and, second, that our interpretation of the meaning of the text as translated is correct. But we are sure only of this, that we are hopelessly in doubt upon both these points; or rather, we might say with truth, that we have good reason to believe that our common translation and interpretation are both incorrect.

Some interpreters say that the text should read, "*Whatsoever* sheddeth man's blood," &c. Calvin declares it to be a *forced* construction which trans-

the Rev. Dr. Cheever, of New York, we believe, who, from the command, "Thou shalt *love* thy neighbor as thyself," draws a conclusive argument in favor of capital punishment. From the law of *love*, he defends the law of vengeance! Bishop Meade, from the text "All things whatsoever ye would that

lates the Hebrew word by the expression "by man." Catholic and other translators reject "by man" altogether. Others declare there is as much reason for saying "will" as "shall be shed." Others declare that the text only forbids shedding the blood of man for food. Who can be *sure* which of these translations is correct? No one. But, unless we are sure of this, we are wholly at a loss, whether (1) the text relates to man at all, or only to beasts and things; (2) whether it authorizes "man" to shed the blood of the man-slayer; (3) whether the text is not simply a prediction that the violent will meet a violent death; or (4) whether the command is not merely aimed against cannibalism. To say that such a text affords us any test of truth is to pervert language.

But, if we admit that our common version is a correct translation of the Hebrew, we are no better off. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood," &c. This includes not only the murderer, but the innocent child who accidentally kills his playmate, and the maniac who in his fury sheds blood. Accidental killing, of any and every kind, is punished as severely as deliberate, cold-blooded murder! Not only this, but the executioner, by whom the man-killer is put to death, also sheds blood; and, according to the terms of the text, he also must be put to death; and so on, until the human race is exterminated! "*By man* shall his blood be shed." The command, if it be one, is not given to governments, for none were then in existence, but to individuals. The avenger of blood is, then, justified under this text in killing his victim. Any man may do it. No exclusively governmental right to inflict capital punishment can possibly be extorted from this text. "*Shall* be shed." But this word "shall" does not necessarily imply command. "The wicked *shall* do wickedly," says David. Does this amount to a command to the wicked to sin? The third verse in the same chapter, from which our text is taken, reads, "Every moving thing that liveth *shall* be meat for you." Can this be construed into a literal command to us to eat every thing that moves? Ought we, then, to interpret "shall" in our text as implying a command? Did not Moses shed the blood of the Egyptian? Was his blood shed? Was not David to all intents a murderer? Was not his sin forgiven? — Where in the text do we find the power to pardon? Who is ready to say, that pardon should in no case be granted to one who had killed another?

We might go on almost indefinitely, showing the doubts that reasonably exist as to the proper interpretation of this text. What test of truth, then, can it possibly afford us? We are sure of nothing, but that we are enveloped in doubts; and literally *know* nothing as to what part, if any, of it is the word of God, or what it teaches.

men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them," teaches the slaves that God requires them to labor for their owners faithfully and honestly, and to be as careful of their masters' property as their own! How, think you, would Mr. Scervant Jones, of Virginia, interpret texts of Scripture? You will remember that, a few months since, in the "Religious Herald," published in Richmond, Virginia, he advertised for sale his farm and house and lot, and "also about forty servants, mostly young and likely, and rapidly increasing in number and value," in order to be able (so the advertisement reads) "to spend the balance of my life as a missionary, if the Lord permit"! Now, as Protestants, we all admit that there is no existing authority capable of telling us with certainty which of these conflicting interpretations of Scripture is the true one. The denial of all such authority forms the very foundation-stone of Protestantism. My interpretation is as good an authority as Bishop Meade's, and yours is as good as his or mine, and neither is any authority at all. How, then, as Protestants, can we find the highest test of moral truth in texts of Scripture? It will be time enough to refute the claim of the Catholics for the infallibility of their church or the pope, in the exposition of Scripture, when they can *infallibly* prove such infallibility. But, so long as their chain of argument must, of necessity, at the very best be only *probably* sound, the infallibility based on such argument can be at best only a probable infallibility, or no infallibility at all. How, then, as Catholics, can we find the highest test of moral truth in texts of Scripture?

What, then, is the highest test of moral truth? It is the consciousness of each man's soul. Each man's soul is a law to himself. We are all conscious that it would be wrong for any one to enslave *us*, or to return *us* to slavery. Nobody questions it. Who more than the slaveholders are more constantly harping upon infringements of their liberty? Take the worst sugar-planter in Louisiana or Cuba, one of those creatures (I cannot degrade the word *man* so to include him) who considers it better economy to work up his stock of slaves once in seven years, and buy new ones to replace

the dead,* and ask him whether it is right for any one to hold *him* in slavery, and who can doubt that his answer would be an indignant *No?* Think you, that Moses Stuart would say it was right for any one to send *him* back to slavery, even to a *Christian* master? No: he would declare it to be a monstrous wrong, even though that learned expounder of the Bible-supports of slavery should have satisfied himself, that Jesus Christ,† if now on earth, would be willing, in order to send him back to his master, to act as United States Commissioner, and St. Paul as United States Marshal. It would require something more than texts of Scripture to satisfy *him* that it was right in the sight of God for any one to send *him* back to slavery. No: every one of us, — the worst of slaveholders, and their still worse Northern apologists, — all admit their consciousness of this truth, all unhesitatingly affirm, that *they* have a God-given right to freedom.

Whence do we derive this consciousness? Why are we *sure* that *we* have a right to be free? Is it because we happen to be rich and influential? No: because then one richer and more influential might rightly enslave us. Is it because we are strong and powerful? No: because then one stronger and more powerful might rightly enslave us. Is it because we are wise and good? No: because then a wiser and better

* For the evidence of this fact, see "Slavery as It Is," pp. 38—40.

† Some persons have objected to this use of the name of Jesus, as wanting in reverence for his character; and I would say in reply, that, if it can be permitted to a clergyman, without the charge of irreverence, to declare that Christ, if now on earth, would under certain circumstances become a slaveholder (as Rev. Dr. Taylor, of Yale College, is said to instruct candidates for the ministry, — "The Church as It Is," p. 95), it ought also to be permitted to me, without the charge of irreverence, to suppose the case of his returning fugitives to their masters, in order to open the eyes of many to the inconsistency between that act and the whole life and teachings of Christ. I wish the point to be *distinctly* brought home to each man's soul, that, if it is right for C—— D——, it would be also right for Christ, if now on earth, to act as United States Marshal; and, if we cannot conceive of Christ thus aiding in returning a fugitive, we ought to be equally shocked at C—— D—— for doing the same thing. And yet how few of those who support C—— D—— would not be shocked at the idea of Christ's being willing to act in his place!

might rightly enslave us. Is it because we have white complexions and straight hair? No: because then one with whiter complexion and straighter hair might rightly enslave us. And there are slaves at the South with as clear, white complexions, blue eyes, and straight hair, as any of us can boast. Is it because we happen to be descended from Saxon ancestors? No: our consciousness of right to freedom does not depend on our ability elaborately to trace our pedigree to individuals of a race, who were themselves slaves for centuries,* and some of whose descendants are at this day held in slavery in the Southern States. Why, then, are we sure that it is wrong for any one to enslave us? It is not because of the accident of our social position, in being rich or poor; it is not because of the accident of our physical condition, in that we are strong or weak; it is not because of the accident of our mental condition, in that we are wiser than our fellows; it is not because of the accidents of birth, or the color of our complexion, or the formation of our hair, or any other of the accidents of human nature; but we are sure that it is wrong for any one to enslave us, simply and solely because we are men, and as such have a God-given right to freedom. But, if we are thus sure that it is wrong for any one to enslave us, simply because we are men, then we are also sure that it is wrong for us to enslave others, simply because they are men. For the same reason we are sure that it is wrong for any one, under any circumstances, to hold us in slavery, we are also sure that it is wrong for us, under any circumstances, to hold in slavery the poorest, weakest, most degraded African that lives; for he, too, is a man, created in the image of God.

But we are also sure, from the actual workings of slavery, that this consciousness is correct. Every man is endowed by nature with a mind, soul, and affections capable of improvement; which, therefore, it is his duty to improve; and which, accordingly, he has a natural right to improve, to the utmost possible extent; and any unnecessary or wanton infringement of this right is a wrong. But the system of

* Villein slavery existed in England for centuries.

slavery as administered in the Southern States, in the great majority of cases, *intentionally* darkens the minds, deadens the souls, and brutalizes the affections, of its victims. Either law, or a custom as universal and remorseless as the law, denies to the slaves all possibility of mental culture, by depriving them of the privilege of learning to read and write. They are not permitted to acquire the very first rudiments of knowledge! And, of the millions of slaves who have been brought up in this Christian land, according to the testimony of the Rev. Dr. Chas. C. Jones, of Georgia (who has unquestionably devoted more time than any other person to investigating the mental and moral condition of the slaves, and has more information on the subject than any other person), only "an almost inconceivable fraction" can read! In his opinion, and that of several religious bodies in the South, the moral condition of the slaves is equally degraded. He says that "they are the most degraded people of any in the United States." He calls them "a nation of *heathen* in our very midst." True it is, that, for some years past, many slaves have had the gospel preached to them; not, however, as the poor and degraded had it preached to them eighteen hundred years ago, but the Christian teacher of to-day aims to make the slaves more faithful and obedient as slaves, and consequently more valuable as vendible commodities! As if the being who said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another," would, if now on the earth, also say, "Ye slaves, work faithfully and diligently for your masters, and never run away, if ye would avoid everlasting torments in hell"! *

Where, if not around one's home, do all the best affections cluster?

> There's nae hame like the hame o' youth,
> Nae ither spot sae fair;
> Nae ither faces look sae kind
> As the smilin' faces there.

But the slave has no home that is sacred from the feet of

* This is the quality of the religious instruction imparted to slaves by Bishops Meade, Ives, and Freeman; by Dr. Jones, and other eminent Southern clergymen. See "Slavery and the Constitution," chap. v.

the spoiler. No joys can cluster around *his* hearthstone. Where, if not in the tender relations of father and mother, brother and sister, parent and child, are all the best and purest affections of our nature cherished and expanded? But, in the estimation of law and common practice, the slave has no family, any more than the horse or the cow! Marriage is denied to the slaves. They are compelled to live in a state of concubinage. The very corner-stone of the family relation, and therefore of home, is ruthlessly cut away. At any time, at the mere caprice of an owner or creditor, the father or mother, the brother or sister, may be put upon the auction-block, and sold to the highest bidder! Henry Brown, in order to be able to live with his wife at all, was obliged to hire her of her owner, who happened to be a Methodist minister; and, when that minister wished to raise some money, he sold Brown's wife and children before his very face, although he professed to be a minister of Him who preached deliverance to the captive, — one of those so-called holy men who are called of God, and solemnly set apart to preach to all men the gospel of love! And *how* are they sold? Why, we have before us an advertisement for sale of a young girl, about eighteen years of age, honest, industrious, a good cook, fine washer and ironer, and a good seamstress; and immediately above it is the notice of a "*Blooded colt* at auction: a thorough-bred colt, two years old the coming spring, got by Farmer, dam by Lafayette." In another, in the same sentence, are offered for sale "one stallion, Red Buck, and one negro boy." In another, a man offers for sale about fifty "very valuable young negroes, consisting of men and women, boys, girls, and children;" and immediately, in the very next sentence, he offers his "entire stock of blood-horses"! Who can doubt that the holiest, purest, and best affections of the slaves are, in the great majority of cases, as much disregarded as their mental and moral improvement?

Does any one say, that there are many slaveholders who, disregarding the law, give their slaves mental and moral instruction, and protect their family relations as far as they possibly can be under the circumstances? True, it is cause

for rejoicing, that there are thousands of masters who treat their slaves in this manner; but, nevertheless, all slaveholding is wrong. Two things should be constantly borne in mind: *First*, No man can make me, or any other person, a slaveholder, without or against my consent. There is not, and cannot by any possibility be, an instance of a man who is *obliged* to receive a gift of slaves unless he chooses, or of one who is *obliged* to hold slaves longer than he wills so to do. All slaveholding is unnecessary: none is involuntary. *Second*, A slave, no matter what his condition, is still an item of *property* merely, and as such liable to all the incidents of property. So long as the owner's wealth lasts, the condition of his slaves may be tolerably secure; but, as soon as his wealth fails, they become assets for the payment of his debts, and must be sold to satisfy the claims of his creditors. What chance is there that *all* the purchasers will be kind-hearted, all above want, and ready like him to disobey the law in order to retain their humanity? Not one chance in a thousand! What in such case is to prevent those happy slaves from becoming as degraded as the mass of slaves around them? Nothing. What is to become of the mental and moral condition of his slaves, when the kind-hearted owner dies? He may perhaps leave a will, bequeathing them on condition that they shall continue to be taught to read and write, and that their marriages and family relations shall be sacredly protected; in other words, on condition that the legatees shall continue breaking the law as he has done. The law will simply declare all such conditions utterly void, and the legatees will own the slaves unfettered by any conditions. In such case, also, unless *all* the legatees are above want, and ready to break the law for the sake of the souls of their fellows, hopeless degradation cannot fail soon to be the lot of these happy slaves. If the owner dies intestate, and there is a widow, she must have her dower assigned in these slaves, and the residue must be equally divided among the heirs-at-law, — not divided by families, but the husband may be separated for ever from his wife, the brother from his sister, or the mother from her darling child. The *only* object

the law has in view is, that each heir may have his share of the money-value of the slaves. It would be almost a miracle if all the heirs should be above want, and ready and willing, for the sake of securing the mental and moral elevation of their slaves, to disregard all the laws aimed against that elevation. And yet, unless all were thus wealthy and law-defying, and continued so to be, the slaves would of necessity soon become as degraded as their fellows.

As no one has the right unnecessarily to impede in the least *our* spiritual or mental culture, much less unnecessarily to expose us almost certainly to hopeless degradation; so we do wrong, by holding our fellows in slavery, to render almost inevitable the death of their souls. We can see, therefore, from the actual workings of slavery, how correct is our consciousness that slaveholding is always wrong: slaveholding is always wrong, because it either darkens the minds, deadens the souls, and brutalizes the affections, of its victims; or else, without any necessity, renders such moral death almost inevitable.

Such are some of the reasons why we have an unshaken conviction that our principle is right.

We are also sure that our method of promulgating our principle is the best, the only correct method.

What is our method?

We do not endeavor to organize a political party, because we cannot take any executive, judicial, or legislative office, either state or national, without being obliged to swear to support the Constitution of the United States, which is an oath to give slavery material support. It is wrong to swear to support slavery to-day, even though we hope thereby to be able to abolish it to-morrow. It is wrong to swear to support a wrong, if we mean to keep the oath; and to our wrong is added perjury, if we mean not to keep it.

We do not organize a party, because politics is a game of expediency and compromise, even in moral questions; and our motto is, "Without compromise." Besides, by acting politically, we place ourselves, apparently at least, in an interested position. The people lose confidence in the

purity and disinterestedness of our motives, if we propose ourselves as candidates for office. We prefer to belong to no party, but to appeal to men of all parties, to act up to the highest anti-slavery truth they can appreciate.*

We do not organize an anti-slavery church ; not because such an organization may not do very good service to the cause, but because churches, as at present organized, can be formed only by the adoption of some creed, or other statement of religious belief. The formation of a church involves agreement among its members on *many* points; whilst, as anti-slavery men and women, we agree only in one, namely, that slaveholding is always wrong; and, being so, immediate emancipation is the duty of the master, and the right of the slave. Our object is the spreading of *this* truth, and this *only;* not the truths concerning the trinity or unity of God, the atonement, and other doctrines of the church, though more or less important in themselves. On our platform, all anti-slavery men are welcome, no matter what is their religious belief. In behalf of freedom, we will work with the Jew or Deist, as amicably as with the Christian. With us the Catholic or Churchman finds no more favor than the Unitarian, unless by his *works* he shows a more lively faith.

We do not incite the slave to rebel; though, according to the creed of our revolutionary fathers, resistance to tyrants is obedience to God; because no moral question can be settled by force.

We do not, as an association, engage in "running off" slaves. Not that such an act is not perfectly right, and strictly in accordance with the golden rule, — not that we do not honor the heroic Wm. L. Chaplin, who has been willing to risk a prison for the sake of aiding the oppressed, — no ; but because such method of proceeding is extremely partial and limited in its operation, and because it cannot tend to produce immediate emancipation so efficiently as other means.

We do not seek to buy up the slaves, — some of us upon

* This does not prevent me from voting for persons who will *refuse* to take the oath to support the Constitution.

principle, as being a recognition of the right of the masters, but most of us because it would be impossible in this way to attain our object; and because for every slave we buy we strengthen the hands of the slaveholder, and give him an additional stimulus to uphold slavery. But our method is to adopt every just and feasible way of regenerating public sentiment on the subject of slavery. We form anti-slavery societies, sustain anti-slavery presses; we publish and scatter broadcast over the land documents showing the wrongs of slavery; we hold conventions, and public meetings of various kinds; and, in all these and similar ways, we endeavor to gain the ear and attention of the people, and to convince them that slaveholding is always wrong; and that, therefore, immediate emancipation is the right of the slave, and duty of the master. As our principle is based upon our common manhood, we appeal to men, not as partisans or sectarians, but simply as men, who are conscious that it is wrong for any one to enslave them.

Doubtless many will bring up the oft-repeated objection,— This is to do nothing; all this moral agitation can effect nothing unless *somebody votes*, unless *somebody enacts a law* emancipating the slaves. Let us look at this a moment; for no objection is brought forward more frequently, more triumphantly, — none which at first glance looks more valid, and none which, notwithstanding, is really weaker and more unsubstantial.

What is it that supports slavery? The law, you say. Very well; but who enacts the law? The Legislature! What determines the character of the Legislature? The votes of the people! And what determines the votes of the people? Their ideas! It is the ideas of the people; the public sentiment of the people, then, and not its laws, which supports slavery. Theologians tell us that the world existed ideally in the mind of God before the creation, and that it was created as it was, necessarily, because of the pre-existing idea. As it was with the creation of the world, so it has always been with the works of man. They all *necessarily* presuppose certain *ideas*. The constitutions, laws, customs, parties, sects, of any people,

exist solely and necessarily because certain ideas exist in the minds of that people. It was the French writers, — those who changed the *thoughts* of the nation, — and not a financial difficulty, which brought on the French Revolution.

Now, which shall we do first? Shall we seek to change the law by political action, or shall we endeavor to alter the ideas of the public by ceaseless moral agitation? Ideas are the cause; laws, the effect. Shall we endeavor to operate first on the effect or the cause? Evidently the latter. It is impossible to change any effect without first changing the cause. A law which is supported by public sentiment, or the ideas of a nation, *cannot* be repealed. So long as slavery is supported by the public sentiment of this nation, we cannot repeal the laws supporting it. If we could go through the form of a repeal, it would be disregarded. But a law which is not supported by public sentiment is dead, though living on the statute-book. It is of little or no use to go through the form of repealing it. What but public sentiment in Massachusetts effectually repealed the fugitive slave law of 1793? What was it that abolished villein slavery in England? The repeal of the law of villeinage? No: that law exists to this day as much the law of England as ever; but public sentiment abolished the law centuries ago. We cannot legally abolish slavery in this country, or repeal the legal supports of slavery contained in the national Constitution, until we have changed the moral sentiment of the nation on these questions; and, as soon as we have done this, it will be of little or no use to go through the form of abolishing slavery, or any of its supports, for they will be already abolished. What we want is the will, not the power, to abolish slavery.

Such are some of the reasons why we are sure that our method of preaching anti-slavery truth is the best and only correct one.

But, if our principle is right, and our mode of action right also, the result — success — must be certain. Why, then, should we not have a resolute determination to persevere in our good work, until success shall crown our efforts? Do

you say that the struggle is wearisome? True it is so. Who, at times, has not felt discouraged at the distant prospect? How many earnest men and women have stopped by the way! And let him, who feels most assured that his courage and resolution will hold out to the last, take heed lest he fall!

But what good thing has ever been or can be attained without struggle, — often desperate, always a manful, hopeful struggle? Nothing worth having in physical, mental, or moral life can be obtained without effort. What is it that strengthens the muscles, and expands the chest? Is it floating lazily with the current, or rowing against wind and tide? What is it that enlarges and strengthens the mind? Is it going over and over the same mental proposition? No: the mind has already reached that level. We may go over and over again for ever the same demonstration in Euclid, and the mind will not be strengthened or advanced thereby. What is it that purifies, ennobles, and strengthens the soul? Is it the constant repetition or consideration of the same truth which our soul already receives? No: our soul has already reached the moral level necessary to enable it to receive that truth; and it cannot advance at all, merely by recognizing it again and again. But present me with a truth, which at first I combat with my whole heart and soul and strength as error, but which finally in its power overcomes me, and compels me to receive it, — this it is which ennobles and strengthens the soul; this it is which makes a man godlike, erect, and tall. The law of all life is difficulty, struggle, progress. And the converse is equally true, — ease, quiet, decay, death.

If we would benefit ourselves, we must struggle earnestly for others. The changing the opinion of a nation upon any question is a great, and upon the question of slavery it is an appallingly great task; but, in its accomplishment, is the only salvation of the slave. Three millions of our brothers are calling to us for help. And shall we hesitate or falter in the course that God has set before us, merely because we feel sure that our struggle will be most arduous, — that we shall

meet with political death; the estrangement of many dear friends; the chilling coolness of some, and the open enmity of others; detraction, hatred, and abuse? No: let us follow Milton's example, and steer right onward, nor bate a jot of heart or hope. If we lose the whole world, we shall gain our own souls.

> Never give up! There are chances and changes
> Helping the hopeful a hundred to one;
> And, through the chaos, high Wisdom arranges
> Always success, if we only hope on.

A regard for the slave demands of us struggle, — earnest, hopeful, manful. A regard for our own souls demands of us, that we should "labor up the hill of heavenly truth."